

A WEDDING PARDON

By George Elmer Cobb.

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"Norman, her heart is slowly breaking!"

"Do I not know it—have I not seen it through all these weary months of agony and suspense? Still, I tell her to hope."

"Oh, Norman, hope is dead with us long since!"

"It may be the last forlorn chance," said the young lawyer, "but I am go-



Chattered Away About Her Papa.

ing to try it. I have discovered some new facts in the case that holds all of future weal or woe for you and poor dear Miriam."

"You have been as a true son to me, as a loyal loving brother to Miriam. Heaven bless you!" and Mrs. Porter seized the hand of her visitor, kissed it fervently and bedewed it with her tears.

A great tragedy hovered about that

humble little cottage. In an upper room Miriam Porter was wearing her young life away amid dark grief and despair. Her mother shared that misery. Norman Earle had sacrificed his all to help them bear their burdens.

John Porter, the father of the household, was a bluff, honest but quick-tempered man. Six months previous he had become enraged at an insult from his neighbor, Rufus Dawes, a quarrelsome, shiftless fellow. Dawes had seized a loose fence piling to assault Porter. To defend himself the latter had struck Dawes with a heavy cudgel he held in his hand.

Dawes had staggered away, bleeding from a wound on his head. An hour later he was found lying insensible by the side of a shed, a shotgun by his side.

There had been an arrest and a trial. Dawes recovered his senses, but not his reason. He was sent to an asylum and Porter, arraigned on the criminal charge of deadly assault, was sentenced to ten years in the state's prison.

Earle was paying attention to Miriam at the time. It was he who undertook the defense of Porter. The latter admitted that he had struck Dawes, but claimed self-defense. No one had witnessed the quarrel.

When the case was ended, Earle found that he had neglected his regular practice and the cost of an unsuccessful appeal to a higher court used up about all the capital he had. He did not press his suit with Miriam under the circumstances, but he loved her more than ever from his sympathy, interest and contact with the family during their sore troubles.

"I have discovered some new evidence," he now said to Mrs. Porter. "It cannot be introduced in court, but it certainly casts a new phase on the injury Dawes sustained."

"What is it?" pressed Mrs. Porter suspensefully.

"I have found a man, a traveling tinker, who was passing by the